

After 42 years Vietnam Vet is awarded his Bronze Star w/ "V"

In June 1965 Guy Arrans graduated from Paw Paw High School. In October of that year while still 17 years old he enlisted in the United States Navy.

After boot camp he was selected to attend Gunners Mate School. It was during this training that Arrans volunteered to join a select group of men needed to man the newest addition to the U.S. Navy fleet. The PBR (Patrol Boat River), was a 31 foot fiberglass boat with a crew of four. Powered by two diesel engines attached to pumps for propulsion and maneuvering, each boat was armed with twin 50 caliber machine guns forward, one 50 caliber machine gun aft, a 60 caliber machine gun amidships, along with a MK 18 grenade launcher. In addition each crew member carried either an M-14, or M-16 rifle. The boat also had an M-79 grenade launcher, a 12 gauge shotgun, and a 60MM Mortar. PBR's also came equipped with a radar system to help spot the enemy while on night patrols.

After several more months of training, Boat Operations, in Vallejo Ca. SERE (survival, evasion, resistance, escape) and Vietnamese Language school, Coronado, Ca., and JEST (jungle environmental survival training), Philippine Islands, Arrans arrived in Vietnam 13 August 1966, reporting to Commander RIVRONFIVE. He lived with his crewmates and support group in tents for the next 10 months, until U.S. Navy Seabees constructed a barracks building for their use several weeks prior to his departure from Vietnam.

When Arrans arrived in Vietnam there were a total of 70 PBR's in country, by that December there were 120 PBR's and that number remained constant until after his departure. The boats were assigned in teams of 20 boats, and stationed at several different points in the region.

Because there were very few roads in Vietnam and especially in the Delta Area, the transportation system consisted of Sampans & Junks that traveled the thousands of miles of rivers and canals.

"Operation Gamewarden" the code name for Task Force 116, (the only US Navy unit authorized to wear the Black Beret) who's job it was to stop the infiltration of men and supplies along these waterways.

During the period August 1966 & August 1967 these few hundred men on PBR's were involved in over 1,000 Firefights against the Viet Cong. Patrols were made up with 2 PBR's, (a lead boat and a cover boat) 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. For special operations several boats might participate. They would stop and search Vietnamese water craft looking for contraband, set night ambushes in restricted areas, insert, fire support, and extract U.S. Navy Seal Teams, protect shipping to and from Saigon and aid U.S. Navy Minesweepers that kept the shipping channels open. As well as aiding Vietnamese Army Outpost that would come under fire from the Viet Cong.

The "Angel from the Sky" for the PBR men was the U.S. Navy "Seawolf" Helicopter Gunships, with their Pilots and Door Gunners, who were always at the ready to come to the aid of the PBR's when the need arose, which was often. Even with all of this going on the PBR crews made time to help with humanitarian needs of the Vietnamese people.

Arrans like most Vietnam Vets came home from the war and upon his release from active duty, went on with his life. He married his wife Elizabeth in May of 1969, attended Lake Michigan College, and

transferred to Western Michigan University, where he obtained his degree. His first job out of college was with Pri Mar Petroleum, where he is still employed. He and his wife have two children Shelley, and Brett, and three grandchildren.

After years of isolating himself from his experiences, in 2006 he attended a "Gamewardens of Vietnam" reunion in Denver. It was there that he was asked about his awards from Vietnam. He admitted that he had never received the awards (some of which he did not even know that he had earned).

Thru the efforts of other Vietnam Vets, an awards package was sent to his Congressman Fred Upton with their request that Congressman Upton present the package to the U.S. Navy for consideration. It then had to pass thru two awards boards appointed by the top military and civilian command, after which the Secretary of the Navy makes the final decision.

On Monday June 1, 2009 Congressman Upton on behalf of the President of the United States of America, presented Guy Arrans with the Bronze Star w/ "V", "For heroic achievement in connection with combat operations against the enemy while serving as a Crewmember and Gunner in River Patrol Boat (PBR) River Squadron FIVE in the Mekong Delta of the Republic of Vietnam from 13 August 1966 to 2 August 1967. During 245 river patrol Missions, Petty Officer Arrans encountered numerous enemy firefights while interdicting and neutralizing enemy supply lines, including capturing enemy watercraft." "His heroic actions during firefights and outstanding combat leadership were inspirational to his boat crew and prevented serious damage to his PBR. Petty Officer Arrans' courageous actions, unrelenting perseverance, and loyal devotion to duty reflected great credit upon him and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service." "The Combat Distinguishing Device is authorized."

Guy would like to point out that he feels that "Amazing Bond" with all of his Vietnam Veteran Brothers that is formed when men entrust their very lives to each other during such times. But he also has "Special Vietnam Brothers", he arrived in Vietnam where his older brother Leon was already serving a few hundred miles away with the U.S. Navy Seabee's and was followed some time later by his younger brother Gary, a U.S. Marine, doing his part for our Country.

He has always been amazed by the strength of his mother Evelyn Arrans during what must have been 3 years of constant worry and concern for her three sons.

His Thanks go out to: Congressman Fred Upton & his Staff, Master Chief Gary Marker, USN retired, Navy Cross recipient Captain Allen Weseleskey, USN retired, Captain Kenneth Meek, USN retired, and Four-Star Admiral Jonathan Greenert USN, & his Staff.

Guy's final comments: To all of the people serving our Country today. We Vietnam Vets will Honor You Always for what you endure daily on behalf of us, Our Country, and Our Freedom. We Will Not Forget.